OPINION

OCTOBER 1973

Single Copy 50 Ps.

OPINION

Vol. XIV 30th OCTOBER 1973 No. 27

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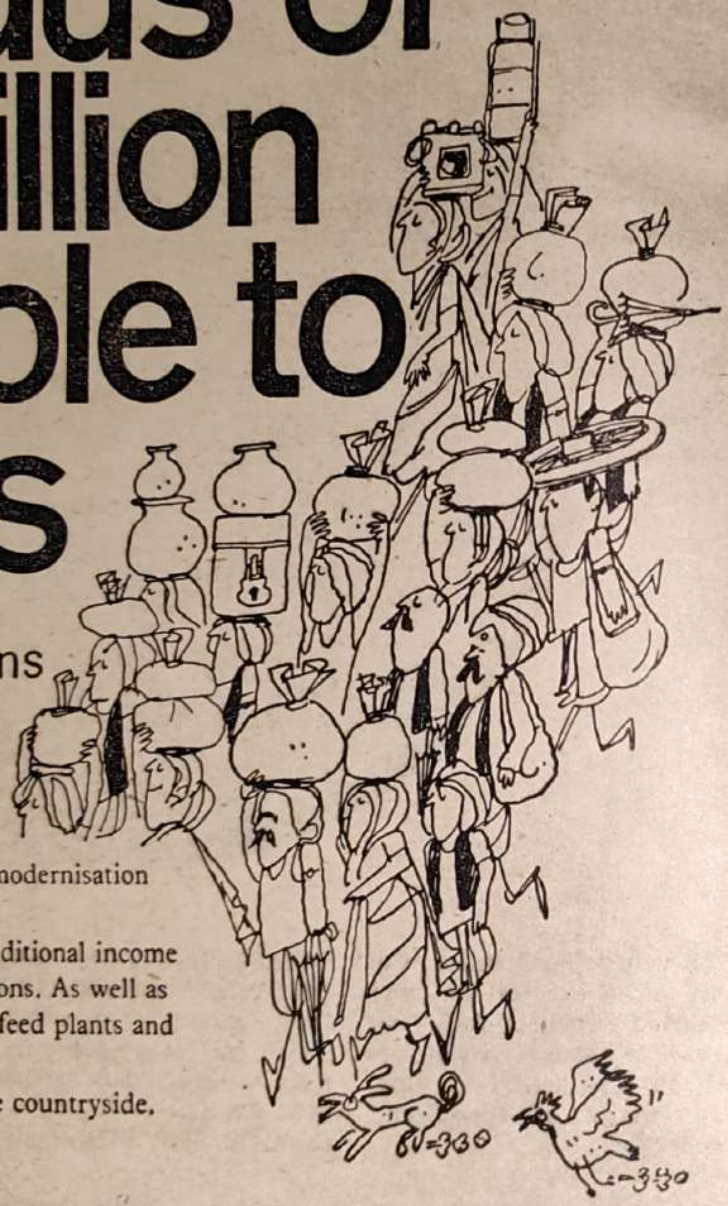

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THE HANGMAN'S ROPE

OLD residents of Bombay solemnly assure you that there has never been a year so full of difficulty for the ordinary citizen, the common man, the 'garib', as the one that is now drawing to a close. High prices of all goods combine with unavailability, even at high prices, of some of the commonest household necessities, to make life a nightmare not only for the poor but for the reasonably-salaried working and lower middle classes, and very arduous, even for the upper middle class. Corresponding with this is an unusual tension everywhere, sharp tempers, rude retorts, failure in the commonest of courtesies, slackness in service, a general malaise. "Bombay, my Bombay," said a woman of forty, who had been born in this city and spent all her life here, bringing up a family of three and working in households to add to her husband's income, "what has happened to my Bombay ? I can no longer think of it as mine, it has become so cold, so distant, so nerve-racking, so unlivable, with such ruinous prices and such constant shortages. If I knew well people in some mofussil town, I think I'd take my family away there. But a distant cousin from the countryside whom I met the other day told me conditions were no better there, in fact in some matters much worse, for oppression by the politically powerful and their henchmen (generally goondas) was the rule, and none dared complain against them, the police and the magistracy having often become, not public, but their personal, servants."

Surveying the face of India today is indeed one of the saddest tasks that can fall on a person of good-will. From almost everywhere there arises the same deep, heartfelt sigh. "The harvest has been good, yes. But who knows ? Everything is so uncertain, no one in authority is honest, trustworthy or reliable. Sophisters and manipulators, this is truly their time, and we, the people, can be nothing but their tools and pawns," thinking men say, "things have been bad before in the quarter-century since independence, but this ! Oh, no, no, no."

Lack of personal integrity in the ruler has been an abiding characteristic of all Indian governments from 1947 onwards. Nehru set the pattern, and except for a year under the truly honest Shastri, it has remained unchanged. The principal cause of our failure in many spheres, of the Indian Disillusionment, as it has been called, has been just this dishonesty, this treason of the rulers, which in its turn has evoked a corresponding treason, lack of integrity, among the ruled. To the horrors of this state we have become inured. Many took consolation in the thought "Things are bad but they have reached their nadir ; they can't really get worse, they may in fact gradually get better." Now that consoling concept has been irretrievably shattered. Things have got worse, even in regard to the most elementary essentials, and confidence has been shaken so badly as almost to be irrecoverable. People ask "How has this come about ? Why has this happened ?"

Well-known is it that while it is possible to maintain a level of good, it is futile to expect to maintain a level of evil. If you will not work

actively to reduce evil, its level will rise and rise until it engulfs almost everything. To the rising level of the evil of the past, Mrs. Gandhi added fresh polluted streams. The result is clear for all to see. Nehru had his one or two Communists in Government and Party, his Krishna Menon, his Malaviya, but even these on the whole he did not let run away with him. About a third of Mrs. Gandhi's government consists of Communists and she eagerly adopts pro-Communist policies. Through thick and thin she supports the Russian Communist chiefs with whom she has entered into an alliance and seems to have a union of hearts.

"Mr. Kumaramangalam and many of his comrades-in-faith hastened to join the Congress (1969). Some of them have now come to occupy important positions both in the Government and in the Congress Party. Prominent among these are D. P. Dhar, K. R. Ganesh, Nurul Hasan, K. V. Raghunath Reddy, R. K. Khadilkar, Chandrajit Yadav, Rajni Patel. Scores of Communists and 'progressives' are also now members of the Congress legislature parties, while some of them hold ministerial and party offices in the States. . . . The Communists and fellow-travellers had strengthened themselves in the CPP. According to one reckoning there are nearly 70 ex-Communists and fellow-travellers in CPP." (Satindra Singh, Kumarmangalam's Thesis).

What does this influx of Communists in Government and Party mean ? To answer that, one must consider the reality of the Communist, his true nature and his own view of his function in a non-Communist state. A Communist cannot by the very essence of his own belief be a good man. The guidance of conscience is not for him. Only that is right, he holds, which helps forward the progress, the onward march, of his Party, only that bad which hinders it. The worst actions from the normal human point of view, those from which the ordinary citizen would shrink with horror, may to him seem most praiseworthy if by reason of them the strength or influence of his Party is increased. The Communist also cannot be a good Indian, for his primary allegiance is not to the country of his birth, India, but to the land of his faith, the Soviet Union. He must serve first, second and all the time the interests of the Soviet Union. He must accept, above all, the instructions of its chiefs. The Communist's view of his own function in a non-Communist land, the principal purpose of his existence, his high aspiring aim, can only be one, to subvert the non-Communist state in which he was born and where he lives into a Communist state, to bestow upon it the blessings of the dictatorial, totalitarian Communist form of government, to make it a People's Democracy under the aegis of the Soviet Union.

It might have been thought that this elementary knowledge about the Communists would be quite enough to prevent any leader of a democratic country or party from introducing them into the Government or party. Mrs. Gandhi however has not only flung wide open the gates of her stronghold to them, she has enthusiastically clasped them to her bosom. And the reward ? The happenings you and I see all around us every day. "We support democratic institutions as the hangman's rope does the neck of the man to be hanged," said that prophet and king of the Com-

munists, Lenin, and the Communists in Mrs. Gandhi's Government and Party miss no opportunity of acting up to his maxim. They too support the Constitution and beneficial institutions of this self-governing, democratic country as the hangman's rope does the neck of the man to be hanged. Their objective being the hanging of the man as soon as possible, they devote a good deal of their energy to the taking of the steps that will hasten the moment of the final tightening of the rope. Order, accord among different classes, industrial peace, reasonable prices, a degree of contentment, sensible educational progress, the increase of the common cake by individual initiative, a growing emotional unity among the diverse elements of the country—all these to them are anathemā, for they strengthen the neck of the man to be hanged and may even make it possible for him to break away from the rope. Naturally then their preference is all for discontent, mass movements, disorder, public dissatisfaction, a state of turmoil, troubled waters here, there and everywhere in which they can fish to their own satisfaction and the bringing nearer of their final goal. The greater the harassment felt by the people, the more uncertain and confused their minds, the easier for us to lead them or bludgeon them in the direction we want, they feel. This, good friends, is why things are as unsatisfactory as they are in Bombay and elsewhere today.

Not that the objective conditions are often not unfavourable. We are a poor country, our population rises at an inordinate rate, our economic policies have been very wrong, our ruling elite has more often than not been neglectful of the country's real interests, personal integrity is at a discount not only in its ranks, but among us generally, etc., etc., etc. And yet, none of these, by itself or in combination with the others, accounts for the special misery, the feeling of confused helplessness, the sheer exasperation and hopelessness of the present time. The witches who brew that potion and spread it so skilfully, widely and secretly throughout the country are in the Cabinet and the Ruling Party itself, staunch adherents of the Hammer and Sickle, though very careful not to display it on their caps, sleeves or cloaks.

What next of Hecate herself, true mistress of this Hell's crew, who exemplifies so often in her acts the Satanic law, Foul is fair and fair is foul. "Poor, dear girl," says many an elderly, high-bracket lady, "How they malign her! She isn't a Communist, of course she isn't. She does do some strange things, but then all these self-seekers round her mislead her." It may straightaway be agreed that in any ideological sense she may not be a Communist. Let it be conceded that she may still have the vestige of a conscience, and on a few occasions of a public nature may even allow herself to be guided by it. She may also still be capable of independent judgment in regard to the Soviet Union and the instructions of its chiefs. But that she wants a Communist-type dictatorship in this country, with herself as the Dictator there can be no doubt at all. That is why she let the Communists into her party and Government. That is why she connives at and encourages their misdeeds.

Her mind works thus: "Power to the highest point, dear Power and I together at the very peak, that is my desire. If things get more and

more in a mess and most people are cowering with fright, nobody will care very much what measures I adopt and why, and so without very special trouble, I shall be able to take my place at the pinnacle of possible power, the headship of a Communist-type dictatorship. I shall keep up the appearance of Parliament for form's sake but naturally there will be no real opposition, and no questioning or criticism of me and my principal servants. Yes, nothing like a Soviet type dictatorship for the power-loving power-loved. Now you'll understand my affection for the Soviet Union and its chiefs. They are my ideal, what I want to be. No one has such power combined with such freedom of action." Over three years ago this writer examined her thinking and presented it to the public in "The Shape of Things to Come" (August 11, 1970). On the basis of it, he warned before the election that a vote for Indira was a vote for slavery, a vote for Indira was a vote for the end of India's independence and for its conversion into a People's Democracy.

So, now, the cup is full almost to the brim. Every day comes news of our getting more and more closely tied up with the Russian Communists (the latest this morning is television programmes) and the great Brezhnev, at last undisputed Vozhd, comes soon to celebrate his triumph at Indira's side through the roaring crowds that at Indira's behest acclaim him and her, little caring that by the same cheers they also acclaim their total subjection to her, and their country's total subjection to his.

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OLD CATTLE

When I was being taken home from the city's nursing home three weeks after the heart attack I saw near the mountain passes the aged cattle being driven to the butchering yard. I saw their thin haunches and the vermilion brand on their shoulders. Some of them paused to chew at the shrubs and to gaze around. I wanted to, for one short moment, get down from the car and join them.

Human beings are never branded with a hot iron. They are just sent home with their electrocardiographs and sedatives.

—Kamala Das

FOREST-DREAMS

The future is a hospital-bed
smelling of foam-rubber and disinfectants
and urine in the bedpan.

Her dreams are aborgines—Tharu
and far-roving Bhil
who walk the forest barefoot
adept at bird-calls and setting traps
and spearing fish;
honey-thieves who can sense a hive
on the other side of the rock
and smell a wind on the other side of the hill.

Sometimes her dreams are left behind
on the forest-floor, a pimpled trail of blood
Sometimes they are left behind
like a severed leg

Then the brain-fever-bird calls
and it rains on the fevered brow

"There will be no fire this summer
in the thorn-scrub that rings
the opalescent lake" she cries out
"or what will happen to the quail-eggs
black partridge, sandgrouse
and other birds whose bellies hug the earth?
Don't let them light a fire
to get a better coat of grass!
Even snakes go about it in a more

civilized way when they change their skins."
"Mama" her eldest daughter says, "you got burnt
in a basement fire,
while taking a puff
in an opium-dive.
There was no forset for a hundred miles around!"

"But with the quail-eggs burnt
how will the quail-chicks be born?"
She slaps the bed, fumbles, gropes
"where is the baby? What have they done to him?
How long is it since I delivered?"
"Mama you are sixty five!
and your granddaughter is old enough to elope!"
But the old woman rambles on
discussing blindfold
her bow-and-arrow-dreams
that shot across those hammocks
of leaf and twisted vine.
Her husband was a spear-blade/arrow-head
and she was a bowstring
that sang to the notched arrow.

And everywhere she smelt the burning earth
grass and stubble waiting for the spark
the scuttling quail
and fledgelings cowerin in the firelines.

They say she is frozen in a state of shock
—anaesthesia, lack of metabolic reserves
senility—hardening of the arteries.
Meanwhile her dreams regress
she talks only of her childhood now.
"Mama!" her daughters remonstrate
"You are shambling across your past
and it will hurt you.
It is so unnecessary, so unreal!"
What was real, her dreams going
into their snakehole once the fire blazed
or these walls, these women?

—K. N. Daruwala

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GRAVE INJUSTICE

M. M. DAVE

UMEDCHAND, Gangaram and Swami Rao are three neighbours residing in a two storied building in a suburb of Bombay. Umedchand is the owner of the building. He resides on the second floor. Gangaram shares the ground floor with another tenant and both of them together pay Rs. 300 as rent. Swami Rao lives on the first floor for which his employer pays a rent of Rs. 200 p.m.

Gangaram has purchased a motor car which he is running as a taxi. He plies this vehicle from 8.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. He serves the common men who find it difficult to rely on the crowded and irregular public transport buses for their transport for the purposes of urgent work.

Swami Rao is employed as a driver by a public company. He carries in the company's car the company's executive from his place of residence to his office and back. He occasionally carries the executive's family too on social visits and bazar trips and sometimes on pleasure trips. Swami's duty is limited to driving the car only. For its cleaning and washing the company is required to employ a separate man holding a licence to drive, so that he can drive the car when Swami enjoys his weekly offs and other holidays, privilege leave and sick leave. Even then, Swami is occasionally required to attend duty on his off days for which, of course, he is paid additional wage at a higher rate than usual.

Gangaram's net income from plying the taxi after deduction of petrol charges, repairs, insurance and other expenses, comes to Rs. 6,000 per annum. He is at the driving wheel for the whole day and almost every day in a month. Out of this he pays Rs. 1,800 (Rs. 150 p.m.) as rent to the landlord Umedchand. During the day he spends about Rs. 2 or so on tea and small refreshments which account for an expenditure of Rs. 700 or so in a year. During the year to which this story relates he was required to spend about Rs. 500 for the medical treatment of his wife. This left him with Rs. 3,000 which his wife had fully utilised for food, clothes and other household expenses. He has two children and he often suggested to his wife to save something so that they might be able to spend on their education a few years hence when they grow to school going age. But his wife's reply was: "You suggest what expenditure I should cut?" Gangaram has been thinking over this problem but has no solution for it. He sees no possibility of curtailing any item of expenditure. To his great surprise, he has recently received a notice from the Income Tax officer asking him to fill up his income tax return.

With whom should he compare his lot? Obviously with that of his neighbours: Swami the tenant on the first floor, and Umedchand the landlord on the second floor. He inquired if either of them had received any notice of the sort he had. They had not. Gangaram calculated their incomes. The rent of the ground floor was Rs. 300, of the first floor Rs.

200 and even taking the rental value of the second floor occupied by the landlord himself at Rs. 200 a month, Umechand's income from rent worked out at Rs. 8,400. He was hardly spending anything on repairs. After deduction of the municipal taxes etc., his net income could, in no case, be less than Rs. 7,000. In addition he had a regular income of Rs. 3,000 from the dividend on shares he had inherited from his father. Of course, the building too was what he got in inheritance. Umedchand did not attend to any business except smoking cigarettes and chewing pans.

Gangaram then calculated the income of Swami who hardly worked for two hours a day with 52 weekly offs, 12 days' casual leave, 30 days privilege leave, and 20 days' sick leave commuted into ten days' leave on full wage. His employment yielded him a total benefit worth Rs. 7,500 or so taking into account the house rent, employer's contribution to provident fund, gratuity fund, bonus, medical benefit, leave travel concession, etc., etc. But he too had not received any notice from the ITO. Gangaram did not understand how he alone was selected for filling up the income tax return out of the three neighbours. At first he thought he might have charged taxi charges at a higher rate to the ITO or his inspector. But that was not the case. Gangaram, therefore, said to the ITO "Look here. My landlord earns Rs. 6,000 as rent from us. Add to that the value of the top floor of the building which he utilises for his own residence. In addition he has an income of about Rs. 3,000 from dividends on shares he has inherited from his father. My neighbour Swami earns Rs. 4,000 a year. Add to that the house rent amounting to Rs. 200 per month which the company pays for him. Further, during the year he got bonus. His company paid him Rs. 500 or so as reimbursement of medical expenses which I don't think he had actually incurred. In any case, his total income exceeds mine by about at least Rs. 1,000. The ITO noted down the figures given by Gangaram and made some calculations and then said, "No. No. Neither of them would be liable to pay income tax. But on your income of Rs. 6,000 you are liable to pay a tax of Rs. 110."

Gangaram says: "I do not grudge the comfortable life Swami enjoys as that is because of his selection by the company executive in the service of the company. He is of course as illiterate as I am. Both of us know only one thing and that is driving a motor vehicle. If the compay executive wants to oblige Swami by paying him a handsome wage for working a few hours and that too only on 240 days in a year, how can I deprive him of that liberty ? I do not grudge Umedchand either for what he has inherited from his father. It was God who made him the son of a rich man and me a child of a poor man. That may have something to do with our actions in previous lives. But I do not understand how the Finance Minister wants me to share with him Rs. 110 out of Rs. 6,000 which I earn by toiling for ten hours every day without any rest, and how he lets off the idler Umedchand who earns Rs. 10,000 or more, and the semi idler Swami whose two hours employment per day, and that too for 240 days in a year, yields him a total benefit of Rs. 7,500 or so."

But the ITO has no time to brood over any such incongruities. He only reads the text of the I.T. Act and the rules, and where the Ministers,

MPs, MLAs, business executives, judges and high Government officers are concerned, the departmental instructions that supersede the Act and the rules for allowing them tax free perquisites. To the ITO an eminent constitutional lawyer's statement in the press: "A very large number of taxi drivers in cities like Bombay earn about a thousand rupees per month and evade tax," is gospel, and it goads him to bring the toiling taxi drivers in his tax net. Gangaram is neither a literate who can read or understand what the ITO reads from his statutes and rules and instructions; nor has he the intellect to comprehend, or information to know, how the big whales like Ministers, MPs, MLAs, company executives, judges and high Government officers escape, to an extent, out of the elastic holes in the tax net, and a small innocent fish like him toiling for ten hours every day to keep on living, remains snared. Before his eyes are only the two: the idler Umedchand and the pampered Swami. Gangaram sincerely feels that the secret slogan that guides the taxation policy of the "Garibi Hatao" Government is "let idlers enjoy, let toilers suffer".

(Continued from page 29)

there was no inconsistency in showing solidarity with a Communist country (i.e., the Soviet Union), while criticising some of its policies. It did not attempt to discuss the Socialist character of a régime such as Husak's that had been installed under the Soviet occupation. Moreover, it virtually ignored Daix' most bitter accusation, which was that the stifling of ideas in the USSR and Eastern Europe, the use of psychiatric and police methods of persuasion and the widespread loss of national identity had broken the alliance between the intellectuals and most Communist Parties in power.

The statement implies that the PCF, like other Communist Parties, is first and foremost the party of the workers. Daix, by contrast, clearly sees the intellectuals, both within and outside the Soviet bloc, as a source of inspiration who will be alienated if they are too firmly disciplined. In effect, Daix is posing the same question as so many of the more independent Communist thinkers have done in the past: can intellectuals play any rôle in the party if they are restricted in the topics they may discuss and the fundamental issues they may raise?

LANDSCAPES

1. The Sea

Through its sinuous insistence
to those whose blood runs
in generations to the sands
the sea beckons.
You may live on pleasant shores
and twisting loops of rivers,
you'll have to face one day and sole
the sea.
Sucked in at ebb and thrown
up at high in the catch of sardines
you will learn the taste, saline
and bitter of what you are
for the sea will tell you:
clutch and drown.
Unlearn all the stern-eyed old man
in December cold drilled in your small spine
all the correct rhythms and strong
strokes, the race here is never won.
Will you pit your feeble breath
against dolphin shark leviathan?
Goes this far your pride, drown ther
or learn: let go.
Hot sunlight a fresh burn
on your back, face the incoming
tide that brings to you what you throw in—
industrial pollution and oil slicks—
drive in as though through limpid lakes
choke on it, eyes smarting, black
glutinous substances attaching to soles
wade in, for if you now turn tail
you'll never know: how far to go.
Amongst the inhumanity of the sky and sea
that nought else on earth achieves
you can shed at first the necessity
to move, then to crave, finally
to live; and if that should not seem
enough, as you drift back to sand
with bottle tops, garlands, coconuts
and shells—for you must; to child
lover, friend, parent—there's this:
sufficient unto the day is the death
thereof.

At seventy dying slowly of cancer
at every pore, it would have been
worth the while to learn.

2. The Forest

An alien sound, that; the tall silence
of rigidly regimental firs dense
with snow. Your laughing track dissolves
in the sunless dark; unsuspected, tales, lines
dimly read forgotten of gnomes
and witches dismissed as 'theirs', return.
The fear of small people, fair people
golden-haired strange people, palpable.
Your brother's large dark reassurance
frail as you furtively drag a foot
from tree to tree. Every one the same upright
and your endless track going around
and around; the king of the line tree
ready to pounce with his long reach.
Will you don the white coat and habit
of rabbit, bear, cat to escape his fist;
talons stretching from tree to tree exactly
alike in gnarled finger, knotted wrist?
Halfway through you learn: stand
as silent as trees and as alike.
Or you'll be known for what you are,
your bright cap, bobbing bauble
proclaim you: human, alien, prey;
in times of eternal vigilance, strain
that will have been a major gain.

3. The City

Some one dreamt these dreams
of brotherhood trust dependence
and threw together: us
from beggar-child to donor opulence
rich man poor man actor thief
postman liftman doctor wife
cross the busy street at a run
to stand in line for bus or onion
avoiding the leper near the temple
and the cow at intersection
look after your pocket, drop-throw-dump-
honk-spit-crack-quarrel, but first
and mainly defecate and copulate; in your seed
reposes future, in your refuse the richess

and greed and even the seed of once-powerful dreams
of merchants lawyers seamen shroffs
councillors barbers goldsmiths kings.
you will not traffic in dreams, you say ?
No dream this ; you are entirely you
at last : elbows out, boot firm upon
neighbour's toe, palm outstretched—
to shove or beg or ward off, eyes in a squint
face stern, ears closed, to survive ;
you'll smell nothing, feel nothing
hear nothing. On the eve of the revolution
that will have been a valuable lesson.

Gauri Deshpande

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THE YAKIR-KRASIN TRIAL AND SOCIALIST LEGALITY

A. G. NOORANI

IN an article published in the 1965 Annual Number of the pro-CPI weekly, *Mainstream*, Mr. V. R. Krishna Iyer (as he then was; in 1968 he became a Judge of the Kerala High Court and last July he was appointed Judge of the Supreme Court of India) referred to a "serious danger" which "lurks in the present judicial set-up and attitude to society. In effect, they are a powerful bastion of vested interests, of reactionary approaches of the proprietariat. *Your laws may be progressive, but if your judges are not, everything misfires—and that is our lot now*—by and large with excellent exceptions though. In any revolutionary venture cadres are everything and *till our judicial cadre is socialistic in its mentality a big roadblock in the people's march will remain.*

"How are the personnel of our judiciary recruited today? From among lawyers who are double graduates—mostly middle class stuff, or drawn from the landed gentry. Their studies in law do not include a paper in socialist constitutions or people's democracies, *nor political theories* or economic principles *which form the foundation of a socialist state*, our national plans and the public sector and people's programmes of development nor the concept of socialist property and *socialist legality.*

"The Soviet legal system, the practical working of crime and punishment there, the hierarchy of courts—particularly the people's courts—*the management of prisons* and *prisoners in socialist states*, the labour unions and factories in those countries, and the laws governing them—all these are just Greek to most lawyers and judges in India, and worse, they despise these concepts in highbrow ignorance. Anglo-Indian jurisprudence is the ultima thule for them. This is why our judicial workers often sing out of tune with the nation." (Italics mine, throughout.)

The article was entitled "For a New Judicial Apparatus" and its author, with respect, rightly emphasises the personality of the judge as the crucial factor. In his celebrated lectures, *The Nature of the Judicial Process*, Cardozo approvingly quotes the German jurist, Ehrlich, to make the same point and with even greater emphasis. "In the long run 'there is no guarantee of justice' says Ehrlich 'except the personality of the judge'."

No less justified is the author's criticism of Indian lawyers' lack of awareness of the operation of "socialist legality". If only they knew exactly how the Soviet legal system operates they would be far more zealous to protect the legal system which functions in our country and far more disturbed by the adulation of "socialist legality", which one has been hearing in this country in recent months.

The trial last August in Moscow of Mr. Pyotr Yakir and Mr. Victor Krasin is only the latest in a series which reveals "socialist legality" at its best on the aspect which is the decisive test of the worth of any legal

system—the protection of the individual against the might of the State. They were charged with having committed offences under Article 70 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR), the largest of the 15 Union Republics of the USSR. The Article concerns anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation.

The famous Russian writers, Sinyavsky and Daniel, were also charged, tried, and convicted under the same Article in February 1966. The poet Alexander Ginzburg compiled a White Book on their trial only to find his associates arrested on January 17-19, 1967. On January 22, 1967, a group of people demonstrated on Pushkin Square in Moscow demanding their release. But not only that. They were also demonstrating against the introduction on September 16, 1966, of Articles 190/1 and 190/3 into the Criminal Code of the RSFSR which made disturbance of public order and the spreading of slanderous inventions about the Soviet Union punishable offences.

The demonstration was duly broken up by the police and a number of demonstrators were arrested and tried under the very Article 190/3 against whose enactment they were protesting.

Ginzburg, I might add, was arrested on January 23, the day after the demonstration and tried together with his associates in February 1968.

Mr. Pavel Litvinov, the grandson of the Soviet diplomat, Maxim Litvinov, prepared a full account of the trial of the Pushkin Square demonstrators. He was questioned and threatened for this but he was arrested later for his part in the small demonstration agains Russia's invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. So was Larisa Daniel. A spate of trials followed.

They are all meticulously listed in the petition dated May 19, 1969, which fifty-two Soviet citizens addressed and submitted to the Commission on Human Rights of the U.N. on behalf of the "Initiative Group for the Protection of Civil Rights in the USSR". P. Yakir and V. Krasin were among the signatories.

Meanwhile, *samizdat* literature had grown. *The Chronicle of Current Events* first appeared in April 1968 and came out every two months until issue No. 27, dated October 15, 1972, after which it ceased to appear.

This is the background of events against which the recent Yakir-Krasin trial took place. But one must know also the legal system under which the proceedings were conducted. No better guide to the Soviet legal system exists in the English language than Prof. Harold J. Berman's book *Soviet Criminal Law and Procedure* (Harvard University Press; Agents: Oxford University Press; $7.50). The second edition contains the full texts of the Criminal Code of the RSFR, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Law on Court Organization. They came into force on January 1, 1961 and are published in the book as of March 1, 1962. Prof. Berman has written an erudite and analytical introduction while the translation of the texts has been done by him in collaboration with Mr. James W. Spindler.

Prof. Berman is a scholar in love with his subject. He treats it with special sympathy and understanding throughout the Introduction even to the point of ignoring some blemishes. Great is its value to the student.

A legal system altogether different from one's own is understood only by proper study and not by a casual visit, least of all a visit under the auspices of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society.

Article 7 of the Law on Court Organization may say, as it does, that "judges and people's assessors in administering justice shall be independent and subordinate only to law." Prof. Berman, however, points out that "In addition to restrictions imposed by their relatively short tenure, judges must report on their work to their electors (whether to the popular electorate or to Soviets of working people's deputies or supreme Soviets), and may be recalled by them prior to the expiration of their term of office (1960 RSFSR Law on Court Organization, Articles 17-19). The provisions of the 1960 Law that judges shall be 'independent and subordinate only to law' (Article 7), like the parallel provision of the USSR Constitution, signifies only that there should be no outside interference in the trial of particular cases ; *it is not inended to insulate judges against general policies of the Communist Party, expressed in 'campaigns' against particular types of criminal activity and in party directives on law and law enforcement.*" If this be the system under which the judge functions, what does it matter if the Party is forbidden to interfere in individual cases ?

Article 16 of the Criminal Procedure Code also provides for judicial independence. It proceeds to add, "Judges and people's assessors shall decide criminal cases on the basis of law in conformity with socialist legal consciousness under conditions excluding outside pressure upon them." One has only to read the detailed accounts of the Sinyavsky-Daniel and the Pushkin Square demonstrators, which are freely available, to realise the judge's role as a virtual prosecutor.

Let alone the judge, even defence counsel are under constraint. The official Soviet view is that "The Soviet defence lawyer is bound to be a propagandist of the Marxist-Leninist world-outlook and of Communist morals in all his activity. In pronouncing his speech of defence, the lawyer must devote attention to the education of both his client *and those present at the trial* in the spirit of the Communist ideology, adding his modest contribution to the *cause of eradicating crime and educating the new man.*" (*Sovetskaya Yustitsiya*, No. 12, 1965, p. 18.)

Such is the set-up. Consider, next, the pertinent provisions of the law and the manner in which they are implemented. Article 70 of the Criminal Code (which has acquired the same notoriety as Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code) reads thus :

"Agitation or propaganda carried on *for the purpose of subverting* or weakening the Soviet regime (vlast') or of committing particular, especially dangerous crimes against the state, or the circulation, *for the same purpose of slanderous fabrications* which defame the Soviet state and social system, or the circulation or preparation or keeping, for the same purpose, of literature of such content, shall be punished by deprivation of freedom for a term of six months to seven years, with or without additional exile for a term of two to five years, or by exile for a term of two to five years.

"The same actions committed by a person previously convicted of especially dangerous crimes against the state or committed in war-time

shall be punished by deprivation of freedom for a term of three to ten years, with or without additional exile for a term of two to five years."

Articles 190/1 and 190/3 read thus:

190/1: 'The systematic circulation *in an oral form* of fabrications *known to be false* which defame the Soviet state and social system and, likewise, the preparation or circulation in written, printed or any other form of works of such content shall be punished by deprivation of freedom for a term not exceeding three years, or by correctional tasks for a term not exceeding one year, or by a fine not exceeding 100 rubles.

190/3: "The organization or, and, likewise, the active participation in, group actions which violate public order in a coarse manner or which are attended by clear disobedience of the legal demands of representatives of authority or which entail the violation of the work of transport or of state and social institutions or enterprises shall be punished by deprivation of freedom for a term not exceeding three years, or by correctional tasks for a term not exceeding one year, or by a fine not exceeding 100 rubles."

Why were they added in 1966 when Article 70 was already there? Because Article 70 requires *mens rea*, the guilty mind, *a "purpose"*. Prof. Berman comments, "a direct (subjective) anti-Soviet intent is required". Besides it penalises only material circulated within the Soviet Union. The Sinyavsky-Daniel trial put the Article to the test. The writings had been sent abroad for publication and they were novels.

Prof. Berman writes: "From a legal point of view the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel was significant, first, because it was the first instance of a public trial of writers of creative fiction for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda; second, because, the defendants' insistence on their innocence provided a test of the integrity of the Criminal Code; and third, because a serious question was raised concerning the applicability of the Soviet law on dissent (Article 70) to persons whose criticism of the Soviet system is expressed in artistic terms. Can a genuinely artistic literary creation be categorized as anti-Soviet propaganda? Does a creative writer commit a crime—even under the extremely broad language of Article 70—when his desire to portray reality leads him to write words which sharply conflict with Communist Party policy and doctrine? In such a case may one infer a political intent from the words alone?"

Hence the enactment of Articles 190(1) and (3) seven months after the trial.

Prof. Berman calls them "the Sinyavsky-Daniel law" and holds: "They make it possible to convict dissenters for committing a crime against the system of administration in cases where the dissent is not motivated by an anti-Soviet intent." Indeed, "Despite these distinctions, the wording of both Article 70 and Article 190-1 is so broad that it is possible in practice to catch almost any strong expression of political dissent within the ambit of either".

After analysing the nuances of the Articles, Prof. Berman concludes: "Judging, however, from unofficial eye-witness reports of political cases, it is at least almost as easy to convict under Article 70 as under Article

190-1 or 190-3, since an anti-Soviet intent may be inferred from the defamatory character of the statement. Moreover, the argument that the accused believed the defamatory statement to be true—*which is theoretically a complete defense under both Article 70 and Article 190-1*—has been ineffectual in practice, except possibly as a basis for commitment to a psychiatric hospital. *Soviet courts will apparently not admit that any sane Soviet citizen can honestly make a statement attacking the Soviet political or social system.*"

If the substantive law can be so grossly distorted, to what avail the procedural safeguards ? Especially since Article 243 of the Criminal Procedure Code, while enjoining the judge to make "objective analysis" of the facts to ascertain the truth, also asks him to take measures for "securing the educational influence of the trial". Hence, the staged trials.

Apart from the violation of the requirement of publicity, other safeguards have also been ignored by the courts.

Witnesses for the defence have been prevented from entering the court-room, or the testimony of some was not recorded by the clerks. Spectators have been permitted to insult the accused and their witnesses, and so on.

The Codes apart, there are special statutes, besides, to take care of dissent. Since February 1970 the former "administrative offence" of "leading an anti-social parasitic way of life", created by the RSFSR Edict of May 4, 1961, has been made an offence under the Criminal Code. "The language of the statute was so broad and vague that it came to be applied in some instances to perfectly law-abiding, hard-working people who in some way offended the authorities, including in one case a young Leningrad poet, Joseph Brodsky, whose only offence was that his poetry was politically unacceptable."

Finally, "At issue also is the role of the Serbskii Institute of Forensic Psychiatry, a scientific research institute which also trains psychiatrists to testify as court experts in criminal cases. Organized under the USSR Ministry of Health, it has been in existence since 1922. Many books have been published under its auspices, and it has had a distinguished record in non-political cases. In political cases, however, it has fallen under suspicion of subservience to the KGB and has been charged with using a doctrine of 'incipient schizophrenia' to justify commitment to psychiatric hospitals of persons who refuse to abide by the limits of dissent laid down by the Communist Party leadership". No more need be said on this aspect. Since the publication of Prof. Berman's work more material has come to light on the subject and has been fully reported in *The Times* (London). The provisions of the Codes regarding "application of compulsory measures of medical character to mentally ill persons" are invoked, no doubt.

Such is "socialist legality"—some socialism, some legality. Let us see how it operated in the latest of the trials. On August 27, 1973, the Moscow City Court began the trial of Mr. Pyotr Yakir, aged 50, an historian and Mr. Viktor Krasin, an economist. Mr. Yakir had been arrested a year ago.

They were charged with having committed crimes under Article 70 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR. The indictment stated that they were used by the People's Labour Union (NTS), an anti-Soviet Organization based in Frankfurt. Its emissaries came to the USSR and introduced themselves as representatives of various "foreign human rights committees" and supplied the accused with copies of *Posev*, journal of the NTS publishing house.

Well before this, as *Izvestia* reported the indictment, the accused had acted as "suppliers of fabrication for Western propaganda centres" and as "paid informers for some of the foreign correspondents in Moscow".

Further, "In an attempt to create *a false impression about the existence in the USSR of some sort of a 'political opposition'* the defendants set up a so-called Initiative Group in defence of Human Rights. Speaking on behalf of this Group, they agreed to make contacts with a certain A. Lagarrig, who called himself a representative of an 'International Human Rights Committee' situated in Paris, Yakir and Krasin asked Lagarrig for money, supplied him with addresses for correspondence and agreed on passwords for future meetings".

Along with NTS literature they received 4,000 roubles, not by Lagarrig, but, curiously, by a representative of "the Italian neo-fascist Europe Civilta Organization". Thereafter cash, goods and literature flowed in plenty, so much so that Krasin could leave his job. "The accused supplied the NTS with slanderous materials, many of which were printed in the illegally published collection, *Chronicles of Current Events*, and which were systematically reprinted by the anti-Soviet *Posev*."

The NTS has figured in earlier Soviet trials, such as that of Yuri Galanskov, another dissident. The reference to human rights committees was significant. *Izvestia* claimed that the Court began hearing the case "at its open session". But, Mr. Edmund Stevens reported from Moscow the same day, "Foreign correspondents who tried to attend today's trial were met outside the court by an affable Foreign Ministry press department spokesman, named Mr. Khudin, who explained that this kind of trial, though billed as 'open', was in fact not open to the foreign press". (*The Times*, August 28, 1973.)

The accused pleaded guilty to the charges but "the educative value" of the trial remained to be demonstrated and so also, of course, the worth of "socialist legality". On August 30, Yakir testified that he regularly gave anti-Soviet material to Alexander Solzhenistyn, who a few days before had revealed threats to his life by Soviet secret police.

The Times (London) reported the proceedings the following day: "Mr. Lev Almazov, President of the Moscow City Court, briefed foreign correspondents on the substance of the testimony. Foreign journalists are barred from the trial. 'Yakir said he more than once gave copies of the *Chronicle of Current Events* (an underground publication) to Solzhenitsyn which he approved.' Mr. Almazov said in reply to a question about whether the name of the writer, a government critic, had come up at the trial. He declined to expand on what was meant by 'approved'." Another name which came up was that of the nuclear physicist, Dr. Andrei

Sakharov. "Mr. Almazov declined to say how many witnesses appeared today (August 30), but named three, including Mr. Krasin's wife."

On September 1, the accused were sentenced to three years in pail followed by another three years in exile—A "moderate" sentence recommended by the prosecutor in view of their "sincere repentance". On September 5, they were produced at a press conference at the House of Journalists for public edification. It was an odd proceeding. Mr. V. N. Sofinsky, the Foreign Ministry press department chief, introduced them and Mr. M. P. Malyarov, First Deputy Prosecutor of the Soviet Union, who lost no time in pointing an accusing finger at Dr. Sakharov and warning him of dire consequences if he did not behave himself. Two unidentified officials screened written questions from the floor.

The *precaution* was very necessary. Else, the show would have been exposed to ridicule even more than it was. Mr. Edmund Stevens of *The Times* reported : "One journalist asked Mr. Yakir about reports that before his arrest he had told Mr. David Bonavia of *The Times*, that if he (Mr. Yakir) should ever admit his guilt and recant 'it would not be the same Yakir you knew'. In reply, Mr. Yakir admitted that he had made what he termed a hasty statement, which he now regretted, but added that Mr Bonavia had no business publishing it as it was made in strict confidence."

Mr. Stevens added : "In an opening statement, which seemed to have been memorized, Mr. Yakir said his 14-month-long pre-trial investigation was 'very correct'. Reports that he had recanted under pressure were 'not true'." Krasin had also been under interrogation for longer than the maximum nine months period prescribed by law.

Mr. Stevens remarked : "One curious aspect in Mr. Yakir's opening declaration was that among his 'illegal activities' was that 'we had meetings with foreigners'. A written question, asking what part of the Criminal Code forbids such meetings, was passed on to Mr. Sofinsky and Mr. Malyarov. It was not answered."

Incidentally, it was this very prosecutor, Mr. Malyarov, who had called in Dr. Sakharov three weeks earlier and warned him to stop his activities.

The confessions the accused made at the press conference were abject in the extreme. Krasin's remark is significant. He had come to realise "that the government and the people in the Soviet Union are one". The object of the trial clearly was to destroy the expression of popular disapproval of the regime and to demonstrate the falsity of the "impression" about the existence of an opposition.

The Initiative Group for the Defence of Human Rights in the USSR, however, was not a body to be crushed so easily. On September 16, braving the wrath of the police, it delivered a statement to foreign journalists in Moscow asserting that the former colleagues, Yakir and Krasin, had their "personality broken" by police investigators and had thus come to tell lies at their trial. On appeal, the prison sentences were set aside and the two went into exile.

It may be recalled that the Initiative Group had on September 26, 1969, made an earnest appeal to the U.N. Secretary-General for his assistance.

The appeal bore the signatures of Krasin and Yakir. They realised the odds against them and begged for moral support. "The silence of international legal organisations frees the hands of the instigators of further repressions".

How true these words are. Organizations like Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, and the International League for the Rights of Man have done their best. But few are the statesmen who have spoken. On September 8, Chancellor Willy Brandt of West Germany expressed his "solidarity with those who are in danger because of their convictions". Very few others of comparable rank have thus spoken. The Austrian Chancellor and the Foreign Minister of Sweden, both non-aligned states, were among them.

In our own country Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan issued statement jointly with Mr. S. Mulgaokar, Mr. M. C. Setalvad, Mr. Asoka Mehta and some others condemning specifically the threats to Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov. They said, "To remain silent would be to ally with the ultimate oppression". AIR has done just that by broadcasting its Moscow correspondent's denigration of the Soviet dissidents. It reflects the political climate of the country.

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THE IDIOCY OF BANDHS

D. D. KARVE

IN the last few years, but particularly in the last few months we have had quite a substantial volume of experience about *bandh*. It is quite obvious that there are in our society certain individuals who take pleasure in making life difficult or impossible for others. Unfortunately they have some followers who are ready to do their bidding. Thus when these unscrupulous "leaders" announce a *bandh* for a city, or sometimes even for a whole state, common citizens who wish to be left in peace and to follow their occupations, are exposed to the danger of being attacked or their property being damaged or looted. They therefore prefer to remain in their homes, do not attend their place of business and keep their shops closed. Similarly railways stop trains outside the *bandh* area, air services are suspended and life comes to a standstill. Buses either stop running altogether or only a few are run under police protection with grills fixed to all glass windows including wind-screens. Public transport like taxis and rikshas are nowhere to be found and even seriously sick patients cannot be taken to a doctor or to a hospital. Persons who live on daily wages have to starve and those who take their meals in restaurants or similar eating places also miss their meals.

Next day, the so-called leaders of the masses declare triumphantly that the *bandh* was a total success. Everybody knows that the "total success" was due to the fear of violence in the minds of most people. Their apparent absence from their place of work is assumed to be in support of the *bandh*, however.

But even granting for the sake of argument that the bandh was a total success, as claimed by the organizers, what exactly has been achieved? Most *bandhs* in recent times have been organized as a protest against the inordinate rise in the prices of necessities of life particularly articles of food. But has the price of even a single article come down by a single paisa on account of the success of a *bandh*? Definitely not. In fact, bandhs often result in police firing and the consequent death or maiming of some persons. Needless to say, the "leaders of the masses" are never among them. What then does it matter if a few people are killed or a few heads broken?

The cause of the rise in prices is mainly the massive deficit financing by the Central Government—in other words, spending more than what it gets by way of revenue. This extra expenditure is covered by printing more bank-notes in the Nasik Security Press. Government departments and the number of people working in them are expanding at a fantastic rate and all this is unproductive expenditure. This is the root cause of inflation and the resultant rise in the cost of living. You may organise [illegible] of *bandhs* and make them total successes, but prices will not [illegible] the case of certain articles, the *bandh* will lead to

Then one may ask, why are *bandhs* organised at all? The point is worth considering.

Persons in power in certain fields do not have to demonstrate every now and then that they do possess power and are able to do certain things. Ministers, chairmen of co-operative sugar factories, managing directors of commercial concerns, presidents of Zilla Parishads and other similar office holders exercise their power every day and have no need to convince people about it.

But what about the leaders of labour unions, presidents of political parties not in power, self-appointed leaders of radical and youth groups, etc.? They feel it necessary to demonstrate to people that they also have power and can do certain things. The leaders of labour who by the way have never done any work, unless making speeches would be called work, have this need to demonstrate their power in a very marked degree. So, they must occasionally incite the workers to go on strike, undertake sit-ins, *gherao* the manager or director, etc. Sometimes they succeed in obtaining some concessions from the management and sometimes they fail. But that does not matter to them. What they wish to show is that they are so powerful that they can bring a whole city to standstill—and the result is a *bandh*. Of course there cannot be police protection for everybody in a *bandh* and, as I said, most people observe *bandh* as a safer course, discretion being the better part of valour. But the main point is that the *bandh* achieves nothing. We have had Poona *bandh* and Bombay *bandh* and, more recently, West Bengal *bandh*, Kerala *bandh* and Assam *bandh*. What have they achieved? Damage to property, loss of life and decrease in production. Of course, the so-called leaders of the masses put out their chests and congratulate themselves for possessing the power to harm other people.

Only if the common men pick up courage and unite to fight the organisers of *bandhs*, can this plague be exterminated.

PEOPLE

Some people are short,
Some people are long.
But every single person
has something wrong.

Maybe its their noses,
Or maybe they eat roses,
But all people have
something wrong!

—Diana Zinkin

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THE FRENCH COMMUNIST DILEMMA

IN the five years since the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, the French Communist Party (PCF) has largely retreated from its unaccustomed position of critic of the Soviet Union and mended its fences with the Soviet and East European parties—including that of Czechoslovakia. It has thus restored the fraternal ties that in theory unite all Communist Parties and link them to their guiding light in Moscow. But as it is at present seeking power through an alliance with the Socialists, the party is at pains to refute any suggestion of dominance from Moscow and to demonstrate its devotion to liberty, democracy and the freedom of the individual. This was its watchword on June 20 when its organisations staged a march through Paris to demonstrate against alleged governmental restrictions on public liberties.

It must have been worrying the PCF leadership, therefore, when M. Pierre Daix, a leading Communist intellectual and former editor of the (now defunct) Communist weekly, *Les Lettres Françaises,* raised the issue of freedom of expression in the Soviet bloc and a France governed by the Communists, notably in his book, *Ce que je sais de Soljénitsyne*, published in May. To engage in open polemics with Daix might spark off a new Garaudy affair*; yet to expel him from the party or suspend him would provoke new doubts about the party's tolerance and democratic principles. His initial offence was to publish a book without first submitting it for the party's approval—a rule for all party members, even if the work is published by a bourgeois firm. Daix commented that the collapse in 1972 of *Les Lettres Françaises*, edited by himself and the veteran French Communist author Louis Aragon, had followed the ban on it in the USSR and withdrawal of Soviet subscriptions in 1969, thus depriving him of a forum for his views. But the content of the book was the PCF leaders' main source of complaint. Daix, who had for long been deeply interested in Solzhenitsyn's work and had in 1962 written a preface to the French edition of *One Day in the life of Ivan Denisovich*, denounced the continuing persecution of the Soviet author as proof of a return to Stalinism in the Soviet Union. He described the inability of Solzhenitsyn and others to have their works published in the USSR, and their constant difficulties, as a form of repression that should be condemned by intellectuals everywhere. In subsequent statements he attacked the "ambivalent" attitude of the PCF to the invasion of Czechoslovakia and accused the party of suppressing *Les Lettres Françaises* under pressure from the Soviet bloc; he doubted whether freedom of expression would be maintained for long if the Communists came to power in France.

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* Roger Garaudy, a party political Bureau member and head of the Centre of Marxist Studies and Research in Paris, was finally expelled from the PCF in 1970 for his refusal to toe the line on Czechoslovakia and other points. He has remained a thorn in its flesh and a target for vituperation from Moscow and its close allies.

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In two interviews with the left-wing weekly, *Le Nouvel Observateur* (May 28 and July 14), Daix added that his work was intended to examine the ideological meaning of neo-Stalinism, which in the Soviet Union was "more virulent than ever in 1973" and now reigned in Czechoslovakia as well. After acknowledging that he himself had been a Stalinist in the early post-war years (whereas Elsa Triolet, the Russian-born wife of Aragon, had returned from a visit to the Soviet Union in 1953 and described the régime as "Hitlerite"), Daix said that in the Prague Spring of 1968 he had openly sided with the reformers. In 1968-69, the invasion had been followed by a form of "normalisation" in Czechoslovakia which destroyed the hopes of Communist progress held by himself and Aragon, while in France the upheaval of May, 1968, underlined the PCF's isolation from young people. The following year Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the Soviet Writers' Union. On the position of the French Communists since their 1972 agreement with the Socialists, Daix pointed to the similarities between the parties' Common Programme and the Czech Action Programme of 1968—which, he noted, had been crushed by the Russians. In Daix' view, the PCF faced a contradiction between the progressive outlook expressed in the joint programme and its more rigid and dogmatic "mental structures"; he hoped that the growing possibility of the Left assuming power would bring more modifications within the party. But in order to make "Socialism with a Human Face" possible in France, he insisted, a study of the mechanics of Stalinism was essential.

The party leadership's main response did not appear until July 31, when Roland Leroy, a Political Bureau member, contributed a long article to the PCF weekly, *France Nouvelle.* He accused the non-Communist Press of orchestrating a campaign to discredit the PCF's efforts to present itself as a defender of individual and collective liberty, and reiterated the view of the party leader, Georges Marchais, that if the Communists were in government tomorrow, Solzhenitsyn would have his books produced as soon as a publisher accepted them. Noting that Daix, who professed to speak as a Communist, had only attended one cell meeting in two years, Leroy claimed that the PCF would do everything possible to avoid expelling a member. But he warned that it ultimately had the right, in or out of a Communist society, to judge a member's views and expel him if need be. Leroy emphasised at a Press conference and on television on July 30 that Daix could write what he liked but he must not attempt to speak for the party.

Three weeks later, Daix expressed his views in *France Nouvelle*—and the very fact that his letter was printed showed the PCF's sensitivity to the charge that it might try to censor him. The weekly also carried a statement by the party's Political Bureau which was clearly inended to refute his points though in fact it evaded them. On the question of freedom to publish under a left-wing government, for instance, it repeated Marchais' statement without admitting that at a certain stage all publishing firms might be State-controlled (as in the Soviet bloc). On Czechoslovakia, the Bureau rejected Daix' accusations about a change of heart and said that

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THE PUBLIC VOICE

"SO the UN troops are at last in Suez ; do you think the cease-fire will stick now ?" asked the smart young woman-secretary. Her neighbour in the queue at the bus-terminal, a pleasant-faced middle-aged political scientist, answered "Probably it will. The Israelis are too clever to do anything outrageous with the UN contingent on the site, and the Egyptians are too battered to want to do anything more militarily at the moment. Really it all depends on the US and the USSR. You can look at this war in various ways, but basically it was a contest between the super-poners, fought without their own nationals being involved. No Russians died and no Americans, but the Russian and American presences were as obvious as those of the owners of the birds are at a cock-fight." "I agree," said a young man in light-blue jeans and an orange shirt, "but what did the super-powers hope to gain by the contest ? Their policy is all for detente now, isn't it, cooing and billing like doves, the kissing Kissinger and the bowing Brezhnev in fact." "Well, haven't you seen two doves in the midst of their advances to one another, suddenly bristle up and have quite a spat. That I think is what happened. No real damage done, except to the Israelis and the Arabs, and the US and USSR glowering but still smiling sheepishly at one another," said the political scientist.

"Altogether too cynical a view," said a tall, thin man in a long black coat and cap. "You don't take into account at all the deep feeling of the Arabs about their territory wrongly seized by the Israelis in disregard of the UN 1967 resolution. The Israelis were consolidating their hold on it, and something had to be done to reactivate the issue. Hence the Egyptian and Syrian attack. If only the Americans hadn't poured such quantities of their latest weapons into Israel, the whole matter might have been settled by now, the lost lands recovered, Israel recognised by the Arabs, and real peace for the first time in this very sensitive area. But alas !" "Now, now, don't feel too badly about it," said the cheerful-looking plump head-clerk of a legal office. "What I always do is to consider the general characteristics of the contestants in any dispute. The Israelis, clever certainly, but too clever by far, so sharp that sooner or later they're bound to cut themselves by their own edges. The Arabs, as a rule, solid from the neck up ; stupidity their second name. Who but the Egyptians would have allowed the Israeli counter-attack across the canal to take place when it could so easily have been scotched at the very inception ? But stupidity has one merit. It is obstinate, and it comes back again and again to the same point. Sometimes it gets what it wants by sheer persistence."

"Israel, of course, cannot be beaten because it is a colony of the Americans, an incursion by them into the Middle-East and the setting up there of a state of their own people and their connections. It is as much a US protectorate as Bylo-Russia or the other nominally independent UN states under USSR suzerainty are. Golda Meir or Moshe Dayan striking inde-

pendent attitudes and saying Israel wants this and will do that, means in fact everything or nothing, depending on how far the Americans will back them in the particular case. In America their pull is in the number and importance of the Jewish-American vote, a very significant and powerful factor which a very vulnerable President like Nixon just dare not ignore. The Arabs and their backers, the Russians, should have thought of that before they started this schmozzle. You may say, of course, the Russians didn't really approve, but the Arabs being in it what could they do but help ? The answer is the Arabs are stupid, but not so stupid as to have embarked on this very hazardous business without full Russian support promised in advance," said a luxuriously-moustached, khadi-clad old man waving around his tightly-rolled umbrella.

"Anyhow, what's important now is proper peace in this area. What are the chances of that ? Can it be achieved ?" asked the young secretary anxiously. "It can tomorrow, if both the Americans and the Russians want it," said a thin-faced, bespectacled journalist, who had been listening interestedly. "As I see it, the American and Russians must settle the whole affair by themselves, decide exactly and in detail what is to happen on the ground, then hand over the document to their respective friends and say, 'now, girls and boys, you may haggle a little if you think you must, but this is it. Sign it and observe it. In any case, we'll see you do, with proper international forces on the spot watching you all the time. You won't sign ? Well then, no weapons from us, no credits, no recognition. You want to find out how cold and lonely the world is without nanny to hold your hand. Do by all manner of means, but don't cry bitterly and rush back to be kissed and comforted when you fall'."

"I can understand the Americans wanting peace, but why should the Russians ? The Communist interest surely lies in keeping the cauldron bubbling. The more anti-American the Arabs get, the better for their loyal friends, the commies, isn't it ?" said the gaily-dressed young man, "Quite so," said the journalist, "but you know the Lenin saying, 'one step backward, two forward'. The Russians realise that with instruments that break in their hands like the Arabs, the time has come for the one step backward in this matter. Saadat was quite right when he said he was accepting the cease-fire because it was impossible for him to fight the whole US. The Americans with their countless pouring out of weapons to Israel were making the pace unbearable. The Israelis are certainly brave, but its not their courage, or even their brains that have got them out of this mess. They're lucky in their patrons, that's all. They'd do well to stop crowing, thank the Lord and be humble of heart."

"You know, all this is so much on a day to day basis. I dare say you're right, but what I'd like to know about is the basic morality of this Arab-Israel conflict. What are the rights and wrongs of the business ? said the young man. "Ah, that's fairly simple. No truly impartial person can deny that the creation of an Israel State in Arab land was an outrage, an indecency utterly deplorable. But there it was and there it is, despite

four wars by the Arabs against it, wars bound to fail because those who had principally comitted the outrage could not possibly allow it to come unstuck. At its best, you may call Israel a piece of humane rascality which cannot be undone, and therefore must be accepted and lived with. The Arabs have to swallow that just like the rest of the world. They might note that their dear friends of the present, the Russians, were also at the time in favour of the creation of the Israeli state; they too helped in the commission of the outrage. That's the long and short of it, young sir," said the old man.

"Most interesting are our Indian reactions to this war," said the young Secretary. "A large number of us are enthusiastically for one side or the other; and so few seem to retain the balance of mind necessary to non-partisan observers. Why do you think we're affected thus?" Well," said the journalist "at bottom, it's what lies behind each side that produces the partisanship. Israel, the Americans, the imperialists, the colonialists, the West, vulgar affluence, so goes the Prime Minister's sub-conscious, and she is pro-Arab. There is also of course the seizing of Arabs territory, the Palestinian refugees, etc., but these merely reinforce the original thinking with the blood. The Indian Muslim's thought process is even simpler, Arabs, Muslims, of course, for them, for them all the time, down with the Israelis. The pro-Israeli too has at the back of all his sophisticated arguments the feeling: Israeli, downs the Muslims, frightful fellows anywhere, gives them good hidings, grand chap, hurrah, hurrah. Our people are particularly prone to identify themselves with groups, even at the cost of our own interests. What would be to our advantage is a correct neutrality, but our tie-up with the Russians has made that impossible, at least at Government level. Still the rest of us needn't take sides. Ah, there's the bus. To our own affairs now. Very refreshing, this excursion to West Asia, thank you all."

"Or have we eaten of the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner?"

* * * *

"The good old rule
Sufficeth them, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can."

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Edited and published by A. D. Gorwala at "Purnima", Ridge Road, Bombay-6 and Printed by him at the Mouj Printing Bureau, Khatau Wadi, Bombay-4. *Proprietor :* A. D. Gorwala.